

6. (Amended) A method for making a decorative lights apparatus comprising the step of attaching decorative lights to a wire coil,

said decorative lights comprising:

electrical wire, and

a plurality of light bulbs;

said wire coil having substantially the same radius throughout the wire coil; and

said wire coil being expandable and resiliently retractable to its original length when released.

Please add the following new claim:

9. A lighting apparatus as claimed in claim 2 wherein the wire coil is not substantially flat when the wire coil is in its retracted state.

Remarks

The Office Action mailed on October 2, 2002 has been fully considered.

The Office Action rejects all of claims 1-8 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Phillips (U.S. Pat. No. 6,048,590). Phillips discloses a collapsible spiral Christmas tree including a central support unit 11 that supports a spiral display unit 13. The spiral display unit 13 comprises a spirally wound support member 40 that is fabricated from a rigid, flexible disk of material.

The present invention, on the other hand, discloses decorative coil string lights that are easily applied to and removed from a Christmas tree, for example, and are easily stored without tangling of the wires. The coil lights 106 are formed of a string of decorative lights that are

attached to a coil of memory wire that expands and automatically retracts back its original length when released. As shown in Figures 1 and 2 of the present application, the memory wire coil 104 has substantially the same radius throughout coil 104 itself. Therefore, unlike Phillips, the coil 104 of the present invention does not form the shape of a flat disk in its retracted state and a conical shape in its expanded state. In fact, Phillips teaches away from the spiral support member 40 having the same radius throughout the member 40 because then it would not expand into the conical shape. ("The disk of material may be stamped or cut in a conventional fashion to provide a series of integrally formed spiral coils 41 which assume a flat configuration in their related state, and which assumes a generally conical Christmas Tree configuration when the center of the spirally wound support member 40 is suspended from the cap element 21 of the vertical support rod member 20..." Col. 2, lines 33-39 (emphasis added)).

Independent claims 1 and 6 have been amended and new claim 9 has been added to more clearly define the present invention. The independent claims, as amended, are patentable over Phillips, and dependent claims 2-5 and 7-9 are patentable for the same reasons regarding the independent claims.

The Office Action also rejects claims 1-8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Mack (U.S. Pat. No. 6,290,372). Mack discloses a Christmas lights string holder comprising a flexible, resilient, helical wire 40, a fastener such as a nail or screw 30, and a cap 50 for dressing the head of the nail. The helical wires 40 are spaced apart at locations on a surface and string lights are wedged between and retained by the adjacent turns of the helical wires 40.

Similar to Phillips, each turn in the helical wire coil 40 of Mack has a different radius so that the coil 40 is flat when it is in its retracted state. ("[T]he first end 42 [of the helical wire coil 40] is formed into a loop or eye *having a first, smallest radius...*" (emphasis added)(Col. 3,


lines 50-51; "[T]he radius of each successive turn 42 increases with increasing axial extent away from the nail head 34." Col. 3, lines 61-62).

As discussed above, the present invention comprises a memory wire coil 104 that has substantially the same radius throughout the coil such that the coil is not flat when it is in its relaxed, retracted state. Independent claims 1 and 6, as amended clearly recite this feature of the invention and are therefore patentable over Mack. Dependent claims 2-5 and 7-9 are patentable for the same reasons regarding independent claims 1 and 6.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version With Markings to Show Changes Made."

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, allowance of the claims in the application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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Version With Markings to Show Changes Made

Please amend claims 1 and 6:

1. (Amended) A lighting apparatus comprising:

decorative lights comprising:

electrical wire, and

a plurality of light bulbs electrically connected to the electrical wire; and

a wire coil having substantially the same radius throughout the wire coil;

wherein the decorative lights are attached to the wire coil.

6. (Amended) A method for making a decorative lights apparatus comprising the step of attaching decorative lights to a wire coil,

said decorative lights comprising:

electrical wire, and

a plurality of light bulbs;

said wire coil having substantially the same radius throughout the wire coil; and

said wire coil being expandable and resiliently retractable to its original length when released.

Please add the following new claim:

--9. A lighting apparatus as claimed in claim 2 wherein the wire coil is not substantially flat when the wire coil is in its retracted state. --